

695. f. 3
4

A

126a 4

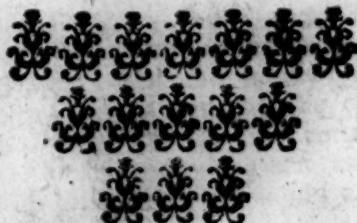
Thanksgiving SERMON,

Preach'd

November 5. 1711.

By GILES DENT.

The Second Edition.



L O N D O N :

Printed for S. Popping, at the Black-Raven
in Paternoster-Row. 1711.

(Price 3d.)

Любимый
Чомяк

Любимый Чомяк

Любимый Чомяк

Thanksgiving-SERMON, &c.

PSALM CXXIV. Ver. 1, 2, 3.

*If it had not been the Lord who was on our side,
now may Israel say; If it had not been the Lord
who was on our side when Men rose up against
us; then they had swallowed us up quick, when
their Wrath was kindled against us.*

THE Title of this Psalm teaches us, that it was compos'd by *David*, but on what Occasion is very uncertain; tho I think there are not above two Passages in the History of *David's* Life or Reign, to which it can easily be apply'd: The first is, when he was pursued by *Saul*, who with such Zeal and Diligence endeavour'd to take away his Life: The other, when *David* and the People of *Israel* were deliver'd from *Absalom's* unnatural Rebellion; for then the Throne of King *David* was exceedingly shaken, and the very Foundations of that Government well nigh destroy'd.

From both these Dangers, *David*, very happily for himself, and the Kingdom too, thro the good Providence of God, escapes. And tho in my Opinion, 'tis the latter of these Deliverances, that he chiefly commemorates in this Psalm, yet we may very reasonably suppose, that while he so gratefully gives thanks to God for this Instance of his Mercy, he would also call the former to remembrance.

However, the Expressions of the Psalmist are very general; and therefore we may with Safety apply them to any great Deliverance, which thro the especial Providence of God happens to a Nation: And in this we only follow the Example of the antient Jewish Church, who after their Return from the Babylonish Captivity, made use of this Psalm in Commemoration of the Goodness of God in their Deliverance.

A Thanksgiving Sermon

But let the particular Mercy to the Jewish Nation have been whatever it would, the Mercies of God to Us, which we are commanded this Day to bless him for, I make no doubt are altogether as great, and may very fitly be represented to you from these Expressions of the Psalmist.

In order therefore to do Justice both to the Words of the Text, and the Business of the Day, I shall explain the Meaning of the Psalmist a little more particularly; and then consider how applicable, what he says, is to our Circumstances.

I. I am to explain the Meaning of the Psalmist's Words a little more particularly.

And this I shall do as briefly as I can, in the Three following Propositions.

1. The Kingdom of Israel, as well as their King, was in imminent Danger of utter Ruin: *For Men had rose up against them, and their Anger was kindled.*
2. They met with a very great and wonderful Deliverance: For in the Words of the Psalmist, v. 7. *They did escape, tho' it was like a Bird out of the Snare of the Fowler.*
3. The Deliverance of that Prince and People from so imminent a Danger, was owing to the signal Interposition of Divine Providence. *The Lord was on their side; and therefore tho' Men rose up, and their Anger was kindled against them, yet did they not swallow 'em up quick.*

These Propositions will give me an occasion to set before you the full Case of the Jewish Nation at that time, both as to their Danger, their Deliverance, and the Joy they express for it; which is the Design of David in this Psalm. The

First Proposition is, That it's plain, David, and the Kingdom he govern'd, were in imminent Danger of utter Ruin: *For Men had rose up against them, and their Anger was kindled.*

And in order to set this Danger before you in as clear and lively a manner as I can, I shall first explain the several Metaphors made use of in this Psalm, and then consider how well the History of King David's Reign does agree with them.

And the first Expression that mentions this Danger is, (a) Cald. *Meh. rise up against them.* (a) One of the ancient Versions reads it in the Singular Number, *when A MAN rose up;* respecting either Saul, who was a constant Enemy to David; or else Absalom, from whom the King and Nation were in much greater Danger. But which way soever

Preach'd November 5. 1711.

5

soever we read it, this Expression undoubtedly teaches us, that there was an Insurrection against the King, an Army rais'd, which threaten'd to banish him from his Throne, to take away his Life, to set up a Tyrannical and Arbitrary Government, and by those Means to involve that Nation in the greatest of Miseries: For the Danger did not only reach the King, but the whole Nation; and those in the Interest of the House of David, were more particularly mark'd out for Destruction. Therefore you see David speaks in the Name of the whole Nation, rather than in his own; *If it had not been the Lord who was on OUR side, now may ISRAEL say: So that the King and his People were threaten'd with the same Calamity, and they were to stand or fall together. For their Enemies had rose up against them, and their Wrath was kindled.* They were incens'd and provok'd against the King, and all who like true Subjects of David, and true Defenders of the Liberties of the Nation, did adhere to him; and they were resolv'd to swallow them up quick: which is the next Metaphor in the Psalm.

This teaches us, That they were as heartily set upon destroying them, and took as much Pleasure in the Thoughts of it, as a Person almost famish'd is eager of Nourishment, and desirous of Food. And as to the hungry Soul, in the one Case, every bitter thing is sweet; so in the other, Rage and Fury supply'd the want of Appetite, and caused the most detestable Actions to become necessary, and in their Esteem commendable.

Thus the Enemies of Israel rose up against them, bent on their Destruction: for they thought to have swallow'd 'em up quick, or in the other Metaphor of the Psalmist, to have swept them away like a Flood; so that there should no Footsteps, no Remains of those that were faithful to the Government any more appear.

The following Expressions to that purpose, are indeed very beautiful, and very lively.

Then, adds the Psalmist, *the Waters had overwhelm'd us;* that is, If our Enemies had prevail'd, this State had been as entirely destroy'd, as the old World was by the universal Deluge, when the Tops of the Mountains were no more seen.

Nay, *the Stream had gone over our Soul;* The Current had entirely swept us away, so that We should have had no more Name nor Place in Israel.

The proud Waters had gone over us: He calls them proud, in allusion to the Swelling of a tempestuous Sea, when the Waves seem to emulate each other in their Motion;

the

A Thanksgiving Sermon

tho as alike they rise, so alike they fall, crush'd either by the succeeding Waves, or else oppress'd by their own Weight.

In which Expressions, doubtless, we have a plain Reference to that part of the History of King David's Reign, which speaks of *Absalom*, whom he elegantly compares to a *Flood* and *Stream*, for the mighty Power of his Arms, and the Swiftness of their Conquests; and to the *Proud Waters* more especially, because it was owing to an Excess of Pride, that this young Man usurp'd the Throne of *David*, whilst he was yet alive.

But further, *David* describes his Enemies as so very cruel, that not content with destroying them by the Sword, they would e'en tear 'em to pieces with their Teeth, as if the Sword could not fast enough devour. And let not any Man think, that it is too bold a Metaphor, when *David* speaks of their being given as a Prey to their Teeth; which indeed is comparing them to Tygers or Wolves, or any Beasts of Prey. For not to mention some barbarous Nations, who devour their Enemies, we know some who are no Strangers to such Acts of Inhumanity.

But to leave this, I go on further to observe, what *David* says of the Danger that Kingdom was in. He compares it to a Bird that was taken in the *Snare* of the Fowler: but the *Snare* broke, and he escap'd.

The *Snare* was cunningly laid for the Kingdom of *Israel*, and the subtle Fowler had actually enclos'd King and People within his Net, and he had no more to do but the seizing of the Prey. Destruction was almost unavoidable, and their Ruin so nigh, that nothing but an extraordinary, if not miraculous, Interposition of the Divine Providence could save them. This he illustrates by the *Breaking of the Snare*. The Bird was actually taken, and all hopes of Liberty or Escape cut off: But a wonderful Accident happening, the *Snare* broke, the Bird escap'd. Certainly no Metaphor could better represent the desperate Condition of a Nation, whose Case was in fact like that in the Parable. Nigh, very nigh to Destruction, must such a Nation be, when their Deliverance from it can be illustrated by such an Accident which does so seldom happen.

To sum up then the Dangers of the Nation, and of their King, in one View: An Enemy had rose up against the King, and penetrated into the very Heart of his Kingdom. They had made a quick and easy Conquest of the Land, and even *Jerusalem* the Capital of *Judea* was in their Possession. The Crown was their Aim, while Bloodshed and Murder, even of their lawful Sovereign, was

Preach'd November 5. 1711.

7

was thought necessary to secure them the quiet Possession of it. Their Enemies were numerous, powerful, and cunning; and their Rage and Fury had not so blinded their Minds, but they carry'd on their Designs with a great deal of Art and Policy: and by the Fineness of their Policy, and the Firmness of their Arms, they had brought that unhappy Nation to the very Brink of Ruin.

Now the Enemy was *Absalom*: The Danger that *David* and his good Subjects were in, arose from his Conspiracy and Rebellion; of which I shall give you as short and as plain an Account as I can, that you may see how well the Description and the Truth agree together.

Absalom, who was *David's* third Son, had slain his eldest Brother *Amnon*, under pretence of revenging the Injury done by him to his Sister *Tamar*. This brought him into disgrace with the King, and forc'd him to fly to his Father-in-Law, *Ammihud*, the King of *Geshur*. After a considerable stay there, *Joab* by his Interest in the King brought him back to *Jerusalem*; where he liv'd indeed, but was not admitted to the King's Presence. This he seems to regret as much as he had done his Exile, and desires to put himself on a fair Trial, and if he should be found guilty, submits himself to the King's Mercy. This Submission of *Absalom* was represented to the King by *Joab* in a very artful manner, whereupon he was immediately admitted to Court; and as a sign of Reconciliation, the King salutes him.

This Reconciliation between the Father and Son was on *David's* part sincere: but *Absalom* could not forget his Father's Treatment, and tho' seemingly reconcil'd, yet secretly carries on his Designs of seizing the Crown.

He had slain his eldest Brother: so the great Obstacle of Hereditary Right was remov'd; and as for his second Brother, whose name we are told was *Chileab*, it is very probable he was dead, because we read no more of him in the Sacred Writings. So that *Absalom* was now the next Heir to the Crown, and was to inherit it at his Father's Death, if he could have waited so long. But his Ambition urg'd him to attempt the seizing it during his Father's Life; which, with a great deal of Stratagem, as well as Force, he endeavours to do.

Absalom, you read, was young and beautifnl, so that in 2 Sam. 14. all Israel there was none so much prais'd for Beauty as *Absalom*. 25. This gave him a great Esteem with the Populace, who are pleas'd much more with the Ornaments of the Body, than of the Mind.

The natural Advantage he had by his Beauty, he heightens by the addition of Art. He provides a splendid and

A Thanksgiving Sermon

2 Sam. 15. and a numerous Retinue, prepares himself *Chariots and Horses, and fifty Men to run before him.* These doubtless struck the Minds of the Common People with a greater Admirations at the Magnificence of the Prince, whom they look'd upon, not only as a very accomplish'd Person, but as the next Heir to the Crown.

Having thus won the good Opinion of the People, he goes on to ingratiate himself further into their Affection, after a very politick manner. For, says the Historian,

Ver. 2. “*He rose up early, and stood beside the way of the Gate* (which he pleas'd to observe was the Place, where in those days the Courts of Judicature were usually kept) “*And it was so, that when any Man, that had a Controversy, came to the King for Judgment, Absalom call'd unto him, and said, Of what City art thou? And he said, Thy Servant is of one of the Tribes of Israel.*”

This Familiarity in so great and beautiful a Prince, did wonderfully increase the Affections of the People to him. For they join'd together the Ideas of his Dignity, as a Prince, and Heir to the Crown; of a fine and handsome Person; and as one of an extraordinary affable and condescending Temper: and thus conceiv'd of him as fit to sway a Scepter; not once imagining that thro these Artifices he was carrying on the Ruin of the Kingdom, and enslaving them.

Ver. 3. The Advice he gave to them that came for Justice to the King, was of a-piece with the rest of his Politicks. “*See, says he, that thy Matters be just and right.*” Don't complain without a cause to the King. But what avails Justice or the Goodness of a Cause? “*There is no one deputed from the King to hear thee. Oh that I was made Judge in the Land, that every Man that hath Suit or Cause might come unto me, then would I do him Justice!*” The plain English of which is this: “*What matters it whether the Cause of any Israelite be good or right? There is no Man from the King downward that will hear it?*” “*And what Justice can be expected from such an Administration?*”

Marg. “*Unhappy Nation! The King will do no Justice himself, nor depute any of his Ministers to redress the Grievances of his Subjects. But were I once made a Judge in the Land, would the King intrust me with the sole Management of the Kingdom, the meanest Subject should have justice done him: they should not address me, as they do David and his Ministers, to no purpose.*” And to ingratiate himself the more, and to make David's Ministry the more odious, thus did “*Absalom to all that came nigh to him to do him Obeisance: He put forth his Hand, and took him, and kiss'd*

Ver. 5.

"kiss'd him ; and it was no wonder, that thus he stole the Ver. 6.
"Hearts of the Men of Israel."

By this means the very Foundations of the Government were sap'd. *David* was reflected on as a Prince that neglected to do Justice : his Servants as proud and inaccessible, only pursuing their own Interests and Glory, while the poor distressed Subjects lay bleeding under their Oppressions. *Absalom* takes part with the People, renders himself popular by joining with them against the very Monarchy, and lamenting the unhappy Condition of a Nation, where no manner of regard was had to Justice and Equity ; deludes the People to join with him, tho to the Ruin of the Constitution, and the enslaving the Nation.

It does not indeed appear that a Neglect of Justice cou'd be charg'd upon *David*, or Male-Administration upon those then in Power ; nor was *Absalom* concern'd to make good the Charge : Provided the Story was plausible, and met with Credit, it answer'd his End as well ; it brought *David* into Suspicion, and his Servants into Contempt. It stirr'd the Minds of that People, who were always inclin'd to Faction and Rebellion, to join with him in dethroning the lawful Sovereign, and setting up *Absalom*, the Usurper, in his Father's Throne ; tho at first *Vid. 1 Sam. 15. 11.*

All things were now ripe for Rebellion, and nothing wanting to compleat the Policy of the Conspirators, but only the Mask of Religion. This soon succeeded, and then the Design of *Absalom*'s courting the Populace discover'd it self. *Absalom* begs leave of his Father to go to *Hebron* to pay a Vow he had made in his Exile, which could be paid no where else. The good King readily gives Consent, and *Absalom* as gratefully rewards him : *For he sent Spies throuout all Israel* ; that is, he plac'd the Conspirators in almost all parts of the Kingdom, who hearing the Sound of the Trumpet, the Signal given, were at once to proclaim *Absalom* King. *Ver. 8. Ver. 10.*

Thus far had the Rebellion proceeded, when *Ahitophel*, who was the Oracle in those days, openly espouses the Party of *Absalom*, at his Invitation : tho it's probable from the Finesse of the Policy, and the dextrous Management of it, he had been no stranger to it before.

No sooner had the News of the Rebellion reach'd *Jerusalem*, but *David* either suspecting the Loyalty of that City, or else loth to be inclos'd within Walls, which once had like to have prov'd fatal to him, fled into the Wilderness, attended with a small number, while *Absalom*'s *1 Sam. 23.*

A Thanksgiving Sermon,

1 Sam. 15. Party increas'd continually. How great a progress *Absalom's Army* made, how narrowly the King escap'd falling into his hands, and the Kingdom into Destruction, the Story plainly enough tells us: And in all probability if he had follow'd *Ahitophel's Advice*, the King had been defeated, and the Crown secur'd by one Blow. But *Hushai*, who had insinuated himself into *Absalom's Party*, tho' really a Friend to King *David*, prevail'd with *Absalom* to defer his Pursuit of *David* for the present; promising him an intire Victory, if he would stay till his Army was re-inforc'd. *Absalom* gave too easy credit to the Advice; not considering, that *David's Army* would increase as well as his, and that some of the unthinking People, who had hearken'd to *Absalom*, now seeing the Miseries that a Civil War, and a Usurper on the Throne, would bring on the Nation, might return to their Allegiance, and his own Party by length of time be weaken'd. But these things are plain in the History. And so it is, that *Ahitophel* mad with pride to see his Counsel slighted, and foreseeing a Defeat would be the Consequence, went home and hang'd himself. Soon after, *Absalom* was routed and slain, the Rebellion ended, the King came back to *Jerusalem*, and all things seem'd to promise his Establishment. But on the sudden a warm Debate arising between the Men of *Israel* and *Judah* about the Honour of bringing back the King, a fresh Rebellion broke out, which had like to have prov'd fatal to that Nation. The Men of *Israel*, under the Conduct of *Sheba* the Son of *Bichri*, blew a Trumpet, and disclaim'd any Portion in *David*, or Inheritance in the Son of *Jesse*. *David* having seen how much depended on the vigorous Prosecution of an Enemy, immediately gave Order to his Forces to march against him under the Conduct of *Joab* and *Amasa*; and soon that Rebellion ended in the Death of *Sheba*. Thus was the Kingdom restor'd to *David*, and in some measure settled in Peace, when this Psalm was compos'd, as a Memorial of his own and the Nation's Deliverance from so great a Danger.

2 Sam. 20. I.

The History, without any further Observations, serves to show us the Greatness of the Danger, and how very suitable the Expressions of the Psalmist are to represent it to us. Wherefore I go on to the second Particular, in which I shall be much shorter. That was,

That *David* and his People met with a very great and wonderful Deliverance.

Now as to this Deliverance, I shall only observe,

I. That it was great in proportion to the Danger.

This

This Danger was as great, as a Nation could possibly be in, that was not absolutely swallow'd up. For the Conspirators were cunning, numerous, and powerful: They were flush'd with Victory, which would have still attended 'em, if *Absalom*, now *David's* Party were incapable of making a stand, had pursu'd his Victories, as a Conqueror ought, and as *Ahitophel* persuaded: And the Deliverance *David* and his Subjects met with, was equally great. The Rebellion was not only suppress'd for the present, but the chief of the Rebels were destroy'd. The General who was the Usurper, and his chief Counsellor, lost their Lives: the one fell ignominiously by his own hands, while the other was slain by *Joab*, once his Friend, but now for Reasons of State become his Enemy. And the following Rebellion also soon ended in the Death of *Sheba*, the Leader of the Conspirators. So that now these Pretenders to the Crown were slain, there was a prospect of a happy and peaceable Possession of it to King *David*. Thus perfect and compleat was the Deliverance! Again,

2. The Deliverance was as wonderful and surprizing, as it was great.

"They escap'd like a Bird out of the Snare of the Fowler, when the Snare was broke." A Bird, if capable of Reflection, could have very little Hope of Life, when it found it self entangled in the Fowler's Snare; and the possibility of the Snare's breaking, would give it very little Comfort. And indeed those in *David's* Interest had Foundations very little better, whereon to build their Hope of Deliverance. For the Story shows us, that the Case in reality was little better than that in the Parable. *Absalom* grew strong continually; all *Israel* and *Judah* revolted to him, he possess'd the Capital City, while *David* fled for Safety into the Wilderness. The whole Policy and Strength of the Nation were united against him: and whence then could he hope for, whence could he expect Deliverance? *Hushai* indeed was a Spy in *Absalom's* Council, and endeavour'd to promote *David's* Interest; but how could *David* promise himself either that his Stratagems should prevail, or *Hushai* remain undiscover'd, or uncorrupted? Such were the Circumstances of the King and People, that if they consider'd their own Forces on the one hand, and the Power of *Absalom* on the other; how numerous his Adherents were, and how few took part with *David*; they must needs despair of Safety. But yet both the Prince and his People were to their great surprize and joy rescu'd from the very Jaws of Death, and like a Bird from the Snare of the Fowler they escap'd the

A Thanksgiving-Sermon,

cunning and enslaving Designs of *Absalom* and his Party. How a Deliverance so great and wonderful was effected, is worth our while to consider, and is the Subject of the next Proposition.

Thirdly, This Deliverance was owing to the signal Interposition of the Divine Providence: *The Lord was on our side*, says *David*, and we are escap'd, &c.

Now here my Busines shall be in as brief a manner as I can to inquire when God may be said to be on a Nation's side, in that manner the Psalmist here asserts he was.

But first, I must take leave to premise, that God may be said to be on the side of *David* and his faithful Subjects in a manner so very peculiar, that in its full extent it can be apply'd hardly to any other Nation. For consider, the Kingdom of *Israel* was subject to God as their Political King, while *David* and the rest of the Princes were only Viceroys or Governors of that People, in subordination to *God*: And then, *God* had given them a Body of Laws, whereby they should be govern'd as a Civil Society; had assur'd them of Protection, while they obey'd those Laws; and had promis'd to defend that Kingdom, as long as their King should rule according to them. And, which is yet more particular in this case, *God* himself had transfer'd the Kingdom from *Saul* to *David*. And therefore whatsoever other Princes may be, he was undoubtedly King of *Israel* by a *Divine Right*, and *God* had promis'd to secure the Kingdom to him and his Post-*terity*. Therefore tho' *God* was pleas'd to permit *Absalom* for a time to invade that Kingdom, yet according to his Promise, in the end he grants 'em a Deliverance. Now,

Tho' this is indeed a special Case, as regarding *God's* Government of that Nation, yet it will help us to form some Conclusions, whereby it may appear, when the *Lord* may be said to be of a Nation's side.

And in general *God* appears for any People when he gives 'em Success against their Enemies, when he protects 'em, or delivers 'em out of their power. For every Instance of Success, or every Deliverance ought to be ascrib'd to the good Providence of *God*. But not to insist upon Generals only, tho' perhaps that is the easiest method of proceeding; I shall venture to lay down these Particulars, as Evidences when *God* may be said to be on a Nation's side.

1. When the Cause the Nation is engag'd in, is just, and becoming the Perfections of the Divine Majesty to countenance.

I do not deny, that *God* may give several Victories to such whose Cause is unrighteous and unjust; and this

is very consistent with the Notions we have both of his Goodness and his Wisdom: yet every Success that a Nation meets with does not denominate God to be on their side, according to the Meaning in the Text. But when the Cause of a Nation is just and honourable, and *God* does favour them according to the Justice of their Cause, it is a Foundation for us to proceed upon, and to think that *God* has a Favour for that Nation. And this was the very Case of *David* before us. The War *David* was engag'd in, was in defence of a Nation given him by *God* himself, against an unjust and illegal Invasion. 'Twas the Vindication of the Liberty of that People which himself had chosen, and the Security of that Religion which himself was the Author of. And if ever there be a just Cause, certainly this must be one, and a Cause in which, perhaps, *God* has appear'd more particularly on the side of a Nation, than any other: For it is doubtless lawful and honourable to defend Religion with the Sword, tho I am very far from thinking it ought to be propagated by it; or that it is in the least just to carry on a War against any People, because they differ in Religion from us. But,

2. It is a sign God is on a Nation's side, when the People he appears for are Persons of Piety and Virtue.

And here also we must proceed with Caution: I don't say that *God* never succeeds a wicked or idolatrous Nation; we know he has often done it; and perhaps it is, in such Cases, no great Difficulty, either from Instances in Sacred or Profane Story, to give the Reasons of it. But when *God* grants remarkable Deliverances or Successes to any Nation that does religiously worship him, I think it may be said, that *God* grants those Successes in favour to such a People: Because the Just Lord loveth the Righteous. And as in particular Cases it is certain *God* does more especially favour his Servants, so it may with the same Truth be affirm'd of Nations; unless we could suppose, that the Supreme Governor of the World has not so much Concern for Communities, as for private Persons. *God*, it's true, may suspend his Blessings, and not always give a Nation Successes suitable to their Piety; but it will not always be so, because a Society can be only rewarded in this World, and there is, as it were, a natural Reward entail'd on such Nations as serve him; and in Cases extraordinary, *God* will let his Providence appear in a very peculiar manner. I might illustrate this, by rehearsing the Histories of the several Go-

vern-

A Thanksgiving Sermon

vernments that have appear'd in the World ; while Virtuous they have flourish'd, and as soon as Vicious decay'd ; while they retain'd their Integrity, they were favour'd of God, and when they degenerated they were forsaken. The Holy Writings give us the famous Instance of the People of the *Jews*, and Profane Histories tell us of the Fate of the *Grecian* and *Roman* Empires; and we might give Instances nearer own Time, if it were at all needful. But,

3. When *God* grants to any Nation great and unexpected Deliverances, by Means that don't seem likely to have produc'd such great and good Effects, he may be said to be on a Nation's side.

*For example, The Nation of Ij'raeL was deliver'd ; and if we look to the Means of their Deliverance, it was owing to the Counsel that Hushai gave Absalom. Now without the Interposition of the Divine Providence, that could hardly have been effectual. For the plain truth is, in some parts of it, it was so extravagant, as when he advis'd, if they found him in a City, to draw it into the River with Ropes ; in other parts, it was so apparently against Absalom's Interest, and which is most of all, so very opposite to the Counsel Abitopbel gave, in whose favour they were so much prejudic'd ; that unless *God* had interpos'd, it could scarce have been effectual : and yet without this, in all human Probability, David had been ruin'd. And the same may be said, when the Pique of a Courtier against an unjust and arbitrary Prince, is the occasion of delivering a Nation from Oppression and Tyranny, or of any Cases of the like nature ; *God* there does make his Power evident, tho the Instrument seems too weak to effect a Deliverance.*

4. *God* then is on a Nation's side, when the Means made use of are no ways unbecoming the Divine Majesty.

Deliverances have been owing to many sorts of unjust Means ; such as Breach of Treaty, Acts of Barbarity, &c. But then it must be said, *God* rather permits than assists in such Cases, and he causes the Wrath of Man to praise him. But in that Case a Nation can no more assure themselves of the constant Protection of *God*, or promise themselves his Favour in time of Necessity, than a wicked Person can argue *God* delights in him, because he is permitted to flourish as a green Bay-tree. For tho for a time such Methods may be attended with great Successes, yet the Blessings of such a Nation are neither so great nor so lasting, as when *God* is really on a Nation's side ; that is, when a righteous Cause is supported by just and righteous Means.

Preach'd November 5. 1711.

15

5. And lastly. God is then on a Nation's side, when he grants them Deliverance according to the Dependance they have on him.

A Nation that depends on their own *Sword*, and their own *Bow*, may be for a time successful; but those Successes are not likely to continue long, nor can a Nation in a time of Distress promise itself Security: But if they do place their Hopes in *God*, and depend upon him, joining what is necessary for their Defence and Security, they may reasonably expect Success; and ought to ascribe the Deliverance they meet with, to his Goodness extended to them.

The Sum of the Argument then is this:

God may be said to be on a Nation's side, when he grants great and unexpected Deliverances to a Nation, who are engag'd in a just and righteous Cause, who make it their Endeavour to serve him, who make use of lawful Means, and who place their Dependance on his Almighty Aid.

Thus have I discours'd on the First Head, and shew'd you the Meaning of these Words as in the Text: I come now to accommodate them to the Business of the Day; and that I shall do in the same Method I have already observ'd, by representing to you our Danger, our Deliverance, and the Cause of it.

And here are two Deliverances, that call for our Thanks to Almighty God on this Day: The one from the *Powder-Treason* in the Reign of King *James the First*: The other from *Papery and Slavery*, by King *William the Third* of Glorious Memory. Our Danger was great in both Cases, and our Deliverance wonderful: We had the same Enemies to contend with, the same valuable Blessings to secure, and the same dreadful Miseries to avoid. Therefore I shall not confine my self to either of them, tho' it is the last, as of the greatest Importance to Us, I shall chiefly insist on.

i. The Danger we were in at that time, must be allowed to be equal to the Danger of the Kingdom of *Israel*, by every one that has a true Notion of those Times, or a real Concern for the *Protestant Religion*, and *Liberty*.

All the Characters that render'd *David's* Enemies dreadful to that People, may be apply'd to the Enemies of this Nation to great Advantage: For they who were our Enemies at the Revolution, were as much to be dreaded for their Numbers, and for the mighty Support they had from those in Power; and they deserv'd the Character of outragious and cruel, much more than the Enemies of *Israel*. Their

A Thanksgiving-Sermon

Their Wrath, says David, was kindled ; and nothing could appease it but the possession of the Kingdom, and the Slavery of the Nation. Our Enemies were not to be satisfy'd with the Possession of the Kingdom, and enslaving the Bodies of Men, unless they had an absolute Power over their Souls, and their very Consciences in Subjection.

If *Absalom* had prevail'd, we don't read he would have made any Alteration in the *Establish'd Religion* : But our Enemies, even before they had compleated their Work, dar'd to introduce a new and idolatrous Worship, and insolently demanded a Submission to it.

As we find *David's* Enemies were enrag'd, so it's plain their Rage arose from an old Grudg, which *Absalom*, and the great Men that were disaffected, had conceiv'd against *David*, because they were not preferr'd as they suppos'd they had deserv'd. But the Rage of our Enemies was more inveterate ; they hated us with a deadly Hatred, and it was for God's sake they did so.

Had *Absalom* been victorious, some of *David's* Servants at least might have had Expectations of Mercy, since Reasons of State would have mov'd him to exempt many from Punishment : But if ours had been successful, no Pity could have been expected, no Mercy hop'd for ; since they say it is doing *God Service* to destroy us, since the Principles of their Religion oblige them to Cruelty, and since under Pain of Damnation they are taught to embrue their Hands in Blood.

And then, as the Cunning of *David's* Enemies render'd them dreadful to him, so we had as just Reason to be afraid of ours. For it must be allow'd, there are not a more Cunning or Politic Set of Men on Earth, than the Promoters of the Doctrines of the *Romish Church* ; nor are any Men, or any Scheme, more perfectly fitted to carry on such a Design. For what Principles could be better calculated for such a Service, than that all things are lawful that are necessary for the Support of their Cause ; than the blind Submission they require to their spiritual Guides, and the Passive Obedience the Church yields to the Pope ? For if he (in the Language of (a) Cardinal Bellarmine) should err, in commanding Vice and forbidding Virtue, the Church is bound to believe it so, unless they would sin against Conscience. Nay, I do them no Wrong, if I say it is an avow'd Prin-

(a) *Bell. de Sum. Pontific. lib. 4. cap. 6. §. ult.*

ciple, That the (*b*) Pope can absolve them from the most solemn Promises, and give them a Power of breaking the most sacred Oaths, without any Sin in doing so, if necessary for the Support of their most holy Cause. Thus, no doubt, they prove themselves the most Holy, most Apostolic, and Infallible Church.

If then we thus enter the Comparison between our Enemies, and those of the Kingdom of *Israel*, we shou'd see that our Danger was really greater than theirs, because all the Characters for which they were dreadful, ought to be apply'd to the Enemies of this Nation in a greater Degree: And indeed we shall find that we were not only in Danger from them in the Years 1605, and 1688; but that they have, ever since the Reformation, been bent on our Destruction, as by a short Account of the Histories of that time will appear.

Before the *Reformation* began by King *Henry VIII.* the Bishop of *Rome* had an uncontroll'd Power over the *Clergy* of this Island. And hence it is, we read so frequently of Kings being (*c*) excommunicated, their Subjects absolv'd from their *Oaths* of Allegiance, or any Duty they owed them (*d*); the Kingdom put under an *Interdict*, and given to some foreign Prince (*e*); Subjects stir'd

up

(*b*) Vide Page 21. in the Instance of Queen Elizabeth. So those that had sign'd themselves with the Cross, and sworn to fight for Recovery of the Holy Land, were absolv'd for a Sum of Money. Matth. Paris. 47c.

(*c*) King John, Queen Elizabeth. p. 21.

(*d*) Dominus Papa Sententiam Excommunicationis tulit in eum, & in omnes Fautores ejus, & totam terram Anglicanam Ecclesiastico supposuit Interdicto, — & duravit annis sex & uno mense, milque siebat in sancta matre Ecclesia, nisi Parvulorum Baptisma, & Confessiones Mortientium. Knighton, apud Decem Scriptor. fol. 2415.

Our Lord the Pope pass'd the Sentence of Excommunication against King John and all that adhered to him, and put the whole Realm under an Ecclesiastical Interdict. — This continued six Years and one Month, and nothing was done in our Holy Mother the Church, unless Baptizing Infants, and receiving the Confession of Dying Persons.

The Reason of this was, because the King refused to admit Stephen Langton to the Archbischoprick of Canterbury, to which he was consecrated by the Pope. Idem, p. 2418.

(*e*) Matth. Paris in the History of King John, has these Words: Scriptit Dominus Papa potentissimo Regi Franco-

A Thanksgiving-Sermon

up to Rebellion (*f*), and laid under the most severe Curse if they continued *loyal*; the (*g*) Prince himself depos'd, the Crown made tributary to the *Pope*, and depending on his Will and Pleasure; *England* esteem'd a Fee of *Rome* (*b*), the Kings called and treated as *Vassals* and *Slaves* (*i*), and their Subjects encourag'd by (*k*) *Rewards* to rebel against 'em, to depose and kill 'em.

And while so great a Power was usurp'd by the *Pope* over the King, no wonder the *Clergy* enslav'd his Subjects. Their Consciences were at the Mercy and Disposal of their spiritual Guides, their Estates at the Service of the Priest, and themselves the most absolute and most abject Slaves: The Nation plunder'd of their Treasure, by the incredible Sums the (*l*) *Pope* drew to

Rome,

rum Philippo, quatenus, Remissionem omnium suorum peccaminum hunc laborem assumeret: & Rege Anglorum e folio Regni expulso, ipse & successores sui Regnum Angliae jure perpetuo possiderent. *Pag. 155.*

The Pope wrote to Philip the most powerful King of France, promising him, that if he would expel King John from the Throne, he should have a full Pardon of all his Sins, and himself and succeeding Kings should for ever enjoy the Crown of England.

The Kingdom of England, in the Time of King Henry III. was given to the Scots, A. D. 1538. Periz. p. 230.

(*f*) *As in the Case of King John, Queen Eliz. p. 21.*

(*g*) *King John, depos'd by Pope Innocent III. resign'd his Crown and Kingdom, and does Homage to Him and the Church of Rome in these Words; "I John by the Grace of God, &c. will be faithful to God, and St. Peter, and the Romish Church, and to my Lord the Pope, the Lord Innocent, and his Successors, &c. Matth. Par. p. 199.*

(*b*) *Pope Paul IV. was angry with Queen Mary, because she presum'd to take the Crown of England, which he says was a Feudary of the Roman See, without his Authority. Periz. Comm. 16 Sec. p. 557.*

(*i*) *Matth. Paris, 751. Nonne Rex Anglorum nosfer est Vassalus, & ut plus dicam Mancipium?*

(*k*) *Vide Queen Eliz. p. 21.*

(*l*) *The Pope demanded a fifth part of the Goods of England, to maintain those Clergy that had Benefices in England, but lived beyond Sea. Matth. Paris, p. 470. And he adds, that upon the absolving those that had sworn to fight against the Turk from their Oath for a Sum of Money, the People were offended; for the most simple look'd upon it as an Absurdity,*

Preach'd November 5. 1711.

19

Rome, from this unhappy whilst superstitious Nation : And both our Civil (m) and Religious Liberties in the Hands of one that knew very well what Advantage to make of 'em.

This the Nation could never bear with any tolerable degree of Patience ; and we find frequent Complaints, both from the (n) Bishops, the Abbats, and Temporal Lords, of the horrid Exactions of the Pope, whom one of their own (o) Monks describes as the most unsufferably proud and covetous Man on Earth, and a Person that might be brib'd to any sort of Wickedness. And it is no wonder the Kings of England, who are Sovereign Princes, were always uneasy under such a Subjection to a foreign Power : therefore we find it ever caused greater or less Contentions in this Nation, even when most bigotted to Popery, as the Prince upon the Throne was timorous or active.

But at length, when K. Henry VIII. came to the Crown, his great Spirit not suffering him to be in Subjection to the See of Rome, he throws off that Burden which his Ancestors had been so terribly gall'd with, but yet so submissively bow'd down to ; and appears (as he really was) an Independent and Sovereign Prince, and resolv'd to put an end to these Usurpations of Pope and Clergy.

Soon therefore he retrenches their Power and their Riches, both which were at that time exorbitant. For some of them had Revenues not far short of the King himself, if the Account of one of their own (a) Authors is to be credited, who tells us, that out of one (b) Monastery, and that neither the largest nor the best endow'd, nor totally plunder'd (for enough was left to maintain the Dignity of an Arch-episcopal See) were taken six and twenty (c) Carriages laden with Gold, Silver, Jewels, and Holy Vestments of costly and exquisite Workmanship, and apply'd to the King's Use. From

furdity, and saw how many Snare the Pope had laid to deprive them of their Estates, and that the Court of Rome desir'd nothing but their Gold and Silver. Pag. ibid.

(m) Matth. Paris, 223. Cartam de libertatibus Angliae concessis in perpetuum per sententiam definitivam datum cassavit.

(n) Matth. Paris gives us the Letters of the King, of the Bishops of the Province of Canterbury, of the Abbats, and of all the Temporal Lords, sent to the Pope. Pag. 610, &c.

(o) Matth. Paris.

(a) Rossæus de Juxta Reip. Chrisi in Reges impics Pates. Ant. 1592. p. 806.

(b) Canterbury.

(c) Cœrpus.

C 2

whence

A Thanksgiving Sermon

whence we may reasonably conclude, that an immense Treasure was brought into the King's Exchequer, out of all the Monasteries that were then demolish'd; as the same Author goes on to observe: and from whence, as I would add, we may see both the prodigious Riches of the Clergy, and the Foundation and Support of their Exorbitant Power.

The King's retrenching their Riches soon brought their Power to an end; and tho' it drew on him the implacable Hatred of the Romish Church, yet it made way for the Reformation of several very great Abuses. But he did not proceed far in vindicating Religion from Superstition, nor indeed was it certainly known which was the Church by Law establish'd in that Reign, since on the same day three of the Romish and three of the Protestant Faith were put to death.

In the short Reign of that pious young Prince Edward VI. under the wise Management of the Protector, the Protestant Religion made several considerable Advances; but the undelerv'd Fall of the latter, and the untimely Death of the former, brought back Popery like a Flood.

For in the days of his Sister Queen Mary, *the Waters* (in the words of the Text) overwhelm'd us. Then our Enemies were triumphant, then they shew'd themselves in their true colours, and by their own Cruelties drew a more lively Picture of themselves than the most accurate Pencil could. 'Tis impossible to describe the miserable Condition of the Nation during that Reign, wherein such pious Men as the Ridleys, Latimers, and Hoopers, and the truly Venerable Cranmer fell. (d) Cranmer, a Man in whose Praise it is scarce possible to exceed; a Man to whom alone England ow'd all the Ecclesiastical Liberty and Reformation they had enjoy'd. This Good, this Great, this Pious Man, fell a Sacrifice to the Popish Rage: and neither

* ABp of Canterbury, nor his Venerable † Age, could save him from an Infamy || Degradation and a violent Death.

† LXVI. By Bonner. But 'tis endless to mention the Deaths, the Tortures, the Imprisonments good Men suffer'd for the sake of Christ; and impossible to describe the Pleasure and Delight which the Bishops themselves, who ought to be Patterns of Holiness and Humanity, took in these Acts of Barbarity, in which some of 'em were sure to be Examples to their Flocks. Nothing was wanting to compleat

(d) Certe Anglia quantum Libertati Eccles. & Sacrorum Emendationi tantum illi uni debet. *Periz.* p. 547.
the

the Misery of the Nation, but the introducing that *curſed Tribunal of the Inquisition*, which forces a Man to be his own Accuser, and usurps the Pretrogative of God, and judges the very Thoughts of the Heart. And this the Right Reverend the (a) Bishop of Sarum, in his *History of the Reformation*, assures us the Queen had a design of introducing. His words are these: *That as a Step to setting up this, a Commission was given to Bonner and twenty more, the greatest part Laymen, to search all over England for all suspected of Heresy, that did not hear Mass, go in Procession, or did not take Holy Bread and Holy Water; they were authoriz'd, three being a Quorum, to proceed by Presentments, or other politick ways, &c. This was look'd on as such an Advance towards an Inquisition, that all concluded it would follow e'er long.* But God in his infinite Mercy did prevent it, by putting an end to this Reign, and (as we hope) to this Religion too. For by his great Goodness the Princess Elizabeth, who was a true and zealous Protestant, was preserv'd after almost a miraculous manner, during this bloody Reign, and succeeded her Sister in the Throne.

The Nation so long oppress'd, and so terribly harass'd, could not tell how sufficiently to admire and to bless God for his Mercy, in delivering them from such an *Inhuman and Barbarous Religion*: For the plain truth on't is, how well soever such Instances of Cruelty might please Bonner, Gardiner, and the rest of their Clergy, yet in the words of that good Bishop, *The Dislike of 'em grew to be almost universal.* P. 313²

The Joy the Protestants had conceiv'd at their Deliverance, heighten'd the *Papish Rage* against them, and industriously they labour'd to reduce them to Slavery again. To facilitate this, the Pope assumes his Power, and thunder's out his Sentence of *Excommunication* against the Queen; the Title whereof being very remarkable, I shall add it in these words: (b) *The Declaratory Sentence of our most Holy Lord Pope Pius V. against Elizabeth the (c) Pretended Queen of England; and all the Hereticks that adhere to her; whereby her Subjects are declar'd absolv'd from their Oaths of Allegiance, or any other Duty they owe her: and those that from henceforward shall be obedient, are by these Presents laid under a Curse.* Which Bull was fix'd in the Night on the Bishop of London's Gates.

(a) *History of Reformation abridg'd*, p. 313. in the Year 1557. Periz. p. 554.

(b) *Camb. Annal. 1570. Fol. 179. Ed. Lond.*

(c) *Pretenſam Reginam.*

A Thanksgiving Sermon

Just such another (*d*) Sentence was publish'd against her by *Sixtus V.* before the Spanish Invincible Armada was to attempt the Conquest of this Island; which they affir'd themselves of, whenever it was attempted. And after the same manner *Clement VIII.* encourages the Irish in their Rebellion, by granting them an Indulgence out of the Treasury of the Church, as their Expression is; wherein he gives them the same plenary Pardon and Remission of Sins, as was given to those who fought for the Recovery of the Holy Land.

In this Treatment there seems to have been something of the Generosity of a Protestant, for at least there was an open Declaration of Emnity; but in other of the Attempts there appears the true Spirit of that Religion, which allows all to be Good that is Necessary. A remarkable Instance of which, we have in the Year 1586. The English (*e*) Seminary at *Rheims* look'd upon the Blessed *Bull* of Pope *Pius V.* as inspir'd by the *Holy Ghost*, and think it meritorious to kill *Princes Excommunicated*, and no less than *Martyrdom* to shed their Blood in such a Cause: and therefore they hit'd (*f*) one fitted for their purpose to kill the Queen, and at the same time wrote a Book (such was their detestable Hypocrify!) wherein they advis'd their Friends in England, that they should not attempt any thing against their Prince, but with Tears, Spiritual Reasons, continual Prayers, Watchings and Fastings, which are the Christians Weapons, they should fight against their Adversaries. When this Danger was over, another threaten'd the Life of that Excellent *Princess*, attended with some very peculiar Circumstances. The French Ambassador, *L'Aubespine*, forgetting his Master's Honour, the Law of Nations, and even laying aside Humanity it self, out of a furious Zeal for the Popish Religion, (*g*) endeavours to engage some desperate Person to destroy her; but was detected e'er his Design could take effect. Thus ended the Design of (*h*) *Lopez* too, who was presented with a Jewel of great price from the King of Spain, and had the Promise of 50000 Ducats if he would destroy her; but God preserv'd this Glorious Defender of Liberty and Religion from all the Attempts, till she resign'd her Soul to him, and her Throne to *James I.*

(*d*) *Camden.*

(*e*) *Idem.*

(*f*) *John Savage.* Ib. p. 403. Ed. Lond. Part 1.

(*g*) *Camden* at the beginning of the Year 1587. p. 449.

(*h*) *Lopez* a Jewish Physician, ad Ann. 1594. p. 76. Part 2. who was to have destroy'd her by Poison.

Very soon after he came to the Throne, the dreadful Design of the *Powder-Plot* was laid by these our Enemies, and just ready for Execution, whereby the Estates of this Realm had been at once destroy'd. And what Confusions had follow'd such a Blow, what Miseries had befallen a Nation, without a Head, without a Council, defenceless and amaz'd, God only knows, who so graciously did preserve it.

I pass the succeeding Reign of that unhappy Prince *Charles I.* tho it is evident our Enemies had a very considerable share in the horrid Confusions of those Times, as we may conclude from their Principles and Practices above-mention'd. But the Actions of that Time are so much to the Dishonour of this Nation, that I shall not revive so melancholy a part of our History on the joyful Occasion of this Day.

In the Reign of King *Charles II.* our Enemies were perpetually at work, and they found very considerable Success in their Designs, which they carry'd on after divers manners : But these things are too well known, to need insisting on.

I come now to the succeeding Reign of King *James II.* when the Designs of our Enemies were come to a mighty height, and they were ready once more to overwhelm us as in the Reign of Queen *Mary.*

The Prince who then sat upon the Throne, was one that openly espoused the Church of *Rome*, and by all Ways and Means endeavour'd to introduce it. To this purpose, such as were Favourers of that Religion were promoted to Places of Honour, Trust and Interest, and many of the contrary were discountenanc'd and displac'd. This made it not only the Fashion, but the Interest of Men of desperate Fortunes, or aspiring and covetous Minds, to declare themselves for it ; and considering the mighty Indifference that the greatest part of a Nation shew in reality for any Religion, those two Principles will make a great many Converts to any Sect or Party, that is in Power and Authority.

But that this Religious might increase with the greater Success, the Protestant Clergy were forbid under severe Penalties to oppose the spreading Evil ; and those Brave (a) Men, who in that evil Day dar'd to speak boldly in defence of the Gospel for which they were set in Places of Dignity, were imprison'd, or accounted Enemies to the Nation, and *Traitors* to the King.

(a) Dr. Sharp *Archbishop of York*, *Bishop of London*, *Bishop of Worcester*, *Bishop of Winchester*, *all now living.*

Then

A Thanksgiving Sermon

Then was fully verify'd what Absalom said of David, No manner of Justice was administer'd in the Land. The Benches were fill'd with Judges of the Popish Religion, or else with Men of profligate Consciences, who perverted the Laws, over-rul'd Witnesses, took care to have Juries form'd according to their own Minds, or else forc'd them to bring in such Verdicts, not as their own Consciences, but as they were pleas'd to dictate. Thus arbitrary Fines were levy'd, thus Imprisonments illegally made, innocent Persons put to Death, and the utmost Cruelty committed under pretence of Justice. No Pity was shown to the Sufferers; and the Chief Justice, the great Instrument of all this Cruelty, void of all Sense of Humanity, insulted the condemn'd Innocent, and boasted of his unparallel'd Cruelties.

Were I able to represent the Actions done in the Western Parts of this Island by that one Man, who boasted ^{* he had condemn'd more to Death, than all the Judges since William the Conqueror's time;} it would be enough to render the Account it self incredible: For a Man could not imagine that one, who was born of a Woman, should degenerate into so much Brutality, as we find there was in that Judg, whose Eye did not pity, neither did he spare.

I forbear mentioning the depriving the Corporations of this Kingdom of their Charters and Privileges, and governing them by absolute Will and Pleasure, with several other Instances of Oppression, too ⁺ notorious to be insisted on: only I shall observe, that a Standing Army, model'd for the most part according to their Mind, and the powerful Assistance that France could afford, gave occasion to carry those things to so great a height, as render'd our Slavery very near compleat.

Sad was the State of the British Nation at that day, and every Man who had any Value either for Religion or Liberty, was justly fill'd with very melancholy Apprehensions: For what could be a more ungrateful Thought to a true Christian, than that he was soon to part with a rational and spiritual Worship, for a Worship that was nothing but Superstition and Idolatry? That from thenceforward he was to bow down to a Stock, and to worship the Work of Mens Hands; that he was to follow his spiritual Guide with a blind and implicit Faith; that his Reason was to be renounce'd, and Transubstantiation believ'd;

* History of England, Vol. 3. pag. 438. Col. 2.

[†] Magdalen College.

that

that his *Conscience* was to be sacrific'd, and he was to call Good Evil, and Evil Good ; that he was to commit Murder for God's sake, and under pain of Damnation really to damn himself : In a word, that he was not to think for himself, nor to follow the Dictates of his own Mind, but to be wholly under the Management of such Persons, whom he might very justly suspect to be carrying on any Designs, rather than the Salvation of those who were committed to their Charge.

And if we were to represent the Sentiments of a Man born to Liberty, and solicitous to preserve it, how must we think he would reason with himself in such a Posture of Affairs ? No Civil Liberty could be hop'd for or expected, where Laws were perverted, and Sentence given according to Party, rather than the Justice of the Cause. Nothing remain'd for him to call his own, whose Conscience was enslav'd, whose Liberty was precarious, and his Life entirely at the Mercy of an arbitrary and tyrannical Judg. Nor indeed, suppose the Body could be at liberty, was that Liberty at all valuable, if the Soul were enslav'd ; nor Life it self a Favour, if Liberty, the greatest Blessing of Life, were deny'd.

But it is time that I proceed to the Second Thing, which is the Deliverance that these Nations receiv'd from such great Dangers : And of this I shall give a very short Account, because it must needs be very well remember'd.

You all know how deep an Impression the Sense of the Nation's Danger made upon the Minds of every good Man ; how much they long'd, and wish'd, and pray'd for a Deliverance, and yet how little hopes there were to found it upon. Prayers and Tears were what they had recourse to, and humble Supplications to God were daily offer'd. These he was graciously pleas'd to hear, and out of his great Mercy sent them a Deliverer. The Deliverance was altogether as great and as surprizing, as that of David in the Text : For the Nation was entirely freed from the Fears they had conceiv'd, and the well-laid Designs of our Enemies in a moment disappointed. God rais'd up our late Sovereign King William, of Immortal Mem'ry ; of whom we may justly say, as the Historian does of Cranmer, that whatever England enjoys of Civil or Religious Liberty, is owing to him alone. For this great Prince, thro the Interposition of the Divine Providence, effectually accomplish'd so great a Deliverance for us from Popery and Slavery, that we were as those that dream'd, and could scarce believe the Reality of those great Mercies that were wrought for us. This was a Deliverance so great and so

A Thanksgiving Sermon,

surprizing, that it deserves to be look'd upon as the Work of God, for the very same Reasons as in the Text. For,

1. The Cause of these Nations was undoubtedly altogether as just, as the Cause of *David*, and of the People of *Israel*; indeed in the Substance of it 'twas much the same: The Liberties of the Nation were to be defended against an unjust and illegal Usurpation, and so it was now; only herein lay the Difference, we felt our selves enslav'd, and if we had not then been rescu'd, our Chains had bound us too fast ever to have thrown them off, nor had we dar'd to complain of them as at this day. And then, in our Case, *Religion* too was to be protected against an encroaching *Superstition*, true Piety secur'd against an idolatrous Faith, which came flowing in upon us, attended by Honours, Interest, Preferments to all that should embrace it, and a Faith which gave a very great Loose to Men of profligate Lives, assuring them of Heaven, without enjoining so hard a Task as Holiness or Virtue.

Now certainly when two such valuable, such inestimable Blessings as these, do lie expos'd to hazard, it must needs be consistent with Justice to endeavour to rescue them from Destruction. Nay, I think, no good Christian, or good Subject of *Great Britain* can in Justice, at such a time, forbear it. This is a Debt he owes to his *God* and to his *Country*, and what he ought to pay, tho at the hazard of his Life. And yet this was all that was design'd by that Great and Glorious Prince who appear'd for us, and by the help of *God* prevail'd.

I am very far from being alone, when I say that the Attempt made by King *William* to free these Nations from *Papish* Tyranny and Cruelty, was very consistent with the Rules of Justice: for whatever some may look upon it now to be, I have the Happiness to have the Evidence of *Her most Gracious Majesty*, whom *God* preserve, of his Royal Highness the late Prince *George of Denmark*, of some of the Right Reverend the *Bishops*, as well as several of the *Temporal Lords* still alive, who were great Instruments in the Contrivance, great Incouragers of it, and soon openly appear'd on the *Prince's* side. In short, the far greater part of the Nation thought it to be just, or else it could never have been successful. But there is little need of Evidence to prove the Justice of the *Revolution*, because the thing speaks for it self, since every Man has a Natural Right to defend himself from Violence and Wrong, when in a State of Nature, and therefore certainly he does not lose it when in a Community;

Preach'd November 5. 1711.

27

nity; but every Community must have the same, and they may * remonstrate, complain, and petition for a Redress of Grievances.

2. The uncommon Regard Men had to Religion about that Time, and the peaceable Disposition there appear'd between all Protestants, show'd in a very great measure, that *God was on our side*.

The good Men in the Nation were extremely apprehensive of the Danger the *Protestant* Religion was then in, and then they began to see the Value of it. The great Liberty they had enjoy'd for some time, and some other things in the preceding Reign, had made 'em cold and indifferent about it. But when they saw it was like to be for ever lost, they shew'd an extraordinary Zeal for it, and a Zeal that could never have been shown at a better Time, or to better Purpose. Nor did their Zeal destroy their Love and Charity towards those *Protestants* that dissented from 'em. Before indeed, they had been taught to hate, to vilify, and evilly to entreat each other; and it must be said, that some very good Men and good Subjects had suffer'd great things for their Conscience sake. But now a better Christian Spirit, and more friendly Temper appear'd, and a true Moderation prevail'd throout the Nation. The Danger was common to all *Protestants*. They forgot their little trifling Distinctions, and united all, as one Man, against that Evil which would have consum'd them both. What a blessed Improvement might have been made of such a Temper as then appear'd, is too great for me to describe: and it is only left us to lament, that no suitable Improvement was made of it; and that such a good Temper and such a Christian Spirit, is now destroy'd among us, by a false Zeal for *God*, and a furious Pretence to *Religion*.

3. God may be said to be on our side, because the Successes were far greater than the Means made use of could be suppos'd to produce. And if we were to consider the Prince's Force on the one hand, and those that were to oppose him on the other; it's plain, that little Success cou'd be hop'd for from the Prince's Expedition.

His Forces were not by one half so numerous, as those that were then in Arms to oppose him. His Fleet was driven back: and tho, thro the good Providence of God, none, or very few of his Ships were lost; yet the Troops were harass'd and fatigu'd, and able to make very little Resistance against the King's Army, if they had remain'd firm to the *Enslavers* of the Nation. But the Ar-

* The Seven Bishops.

A Thanksgiving-Sermon,

my refus'd to oppose Him, whom they look'd upon as their *Deliverer*; the very Guards forsook the King; and the Army revolted in great Numbers.

At Sea, the Fleet, that was appointed to hinder the Attempts of the *Prince*, lay idle and inactive, and suffer'd him to pass; as if he came a Friend to the Nation, and no Enemy to them.

And add to this, That as *England* was then so well provided for its own Defence both by Sea and Land; so *France* at the same time ravag'd some Countries of *Germany*, and put the *Dutch* who had left themselves naked of Troops, into the utmost Confarnation. And if *God* had not been on our side, and infatuated that wise *Prince*; if he had fallen upon the *Dutch*, as he did on the unhappy *Palatinate*, the small Army of the *Prince* must have return'd to the Defence of their Native Country, and *England* been forsaken, and abandon'd to a more rigorous and harder Slavery.

4. *God* did show a peculiar Favour to us at that time, in as much as so great a Deliverance was attended with so little Bloodshed or Barbarity.

Some indeed love to call the Deliverance of this Nation by King *William*, a Conquest; but if it was, it was the most unbloody Conquest that ever was heard of: and an unbloody Conquest of a Nation, and an unbloody Sacrifice, are I think much of a-piece, and fitly proceed out of the same Mouths. But let them give it what Name they please, this is certain, the Blood that was spilt, was very inconsiderable, but the Lenity and Mercy that follow'd upon it, was very remarkable. How becoming a brave Soldier and a pious *Prince* was the Answer, which that great King made to such as thought it might be Politick or Convenient to persecute the *Papists*! * "No!" says he, *I came to deliver the Protestants, and not to persecute the Romanists!*"

I cannot dismiss this Head, without making this Observation. Here you see the Difference between the Patrons of the Liberties of Mankind, and those that strive to make themselves great by enslaving them. The one make their Way thorow a Sea of Blood, and have no Regard to the Lives of their Subjects, but only to sacrifice them to their Ambition, and to the enslaving the Survivors. While the other are extremely tender of their Subjects Lives, and it is with the utmost Regret they are forc'd to punish even those that justly deserve it; as appears in this Case, from that indulgent Act of Indemnity, which was past at that time, wherein so few were

* *History of England*, Vol. 3. p. 532.

proscrib'd, and much fewer of them suffer'd any Punishment at all. But,

5. God appear'd to be on our side, by hearing the Prayers that were then put up for Deliverance.

Our Help was in the Name of the Lord, and so was our Trust and Confidence. We did pray to the Lord in the Time of Distress, and the Lord did hear us, and we did escape. All which Considerations being put together, will show us, That in the Deliverance of this Nation at the Revolution, God in a most wonderful Manner did appear on our Behalf, and granted us a Deliverance, for which we hope Generations to come will rise up and bless him.

All that I shall add further, shall be these three Reflections from what has been deliver'd. And,

1. Let us make the same Use of our Deliverance, as David did in v. 6. of the Psalm: “*Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us a Prey to their Teeth.*” And certainly there is not a Protestant in this Nation, let his Sentiments otherwise be what they will, that either knows any thing of the Religion he professes, or has any Sense of Liberty, but must join in Praise to God, for so perfect a Security of both of them. How very near were they to Destruction! For were not we our selves taken in the Snare? Were they not just ready to seize us as their Prey, and to have devour'd us without any Pity? without any Mercy! Then God rais'd up that *Glorious Prince*, who arm'd with a Zeal for Liberty and Religion, supported by a just and righteous Cause, did by his Blessing, put a stop to their deep-laid Designs, and procure us an Escape from so great Dangers. “*Glory therefore be given to that God, who has so wonderfully appear'd for us.*” And in the Words of the Psalmist, *Let one Generation praise his Works to another, let them declare his Mighty Acts.* We must, we will speak of the Honour of thy Majesty, and of thy wondrous Works, &c.

2. Let us follow the Example of the Psalmist in v. 8. and say with him, “*Our Help is in the Name of the Lord, who made Heaven and Earth.*” And so indeed it was: let us therefore at all times gratefully remember the wondrous Works of God, and in any time of Difficulty, place our Trust in him. We see God was then on our side. And I think, from the repeated Successes he has been pleas'd to favour the Arms of *Her Majesty* withal, we have good Reason to say, he still does appear for us.

Nor do I at all exceed the Business of the Day, when I mention the great Things God has done for us since the Revolution. For if that had not succeeded, we could not have

A Thanksgiving Sermon

have boasted a *Protestant Queen*, the Head and Glory of the Confederacy ; we could not with Pleasure look forward to a *Protestant Successor* in so August and Serene a Family as the House of *HANNOVER*. If God had not favour'd us then, we could not have number'd so many Cities won from a powerful Enemy, by that consummate and unconquer'd General ; so many Provinces rescued ; such Countries restor'd to Liberty, and such Glories obtain'd, as will make the Reign of Queen *ANNE* famous to late Posterity. Nay, which is more, we could not have called any thing our own : Our Lives would have been precarious, our Estates at the Will of the Prince, or of his craving Ministers ; our Religion lost, and all that is valuable and dear to us snatch'd away.

Turn but your Eyes (but that I'm loth to turn you to so melancholy a Subject on a Day of Thanksgiving) Turn but your Eyes, I say, to the *Protestants in France* ! See their Miseries ! Hear their Groans ! Behold them in Dungeons ! See them in Gallies, fed with the Bread and Water of Affliction, and loaden every Day with Stripes ! Behold their Poverty ! See the Fears and Dread they ever live in ! See how they tremble under their *Egyptian Taskmasters* ! and you'll have a very lively Picture of your own Case, if God had not prevented it. But our Help is in the Name of the Lord ; He has deliver'd us, and we are escaped.

Since we are then so happy, there are two things it becomes us to do.

The one is to pray for the Deliverance of our Brethren, that are suffering such Miseries ; and this is all we in private Stations can do. God indeed, it is to be hoped, will incline the *Protestant Princes* to appear for 'em, that they may at length, with the rest of *Europe*, taste the Sweets of *Liberty and Peace*.

The other is, that we should pity and pray for those our Enemies, who are thus persuad'd by cunning and designing Men, that it is meritorious to destroy us. Many, we hope, act in this Case, as St. Paul did when he persecuted the Church of Christ ; he said he did it ignorantly, and in Unbelief, and therefore he found Mercy. And so God grant they may, who hate us without a Cause ; may their Eyes be open'd, may they repent of their hard Thoughts, hard Speeches, and cruel Designs against us ; and God give them Mercy ! But to come to an end.

3. Since God has restor'd Liberty and Religion to these Nations, stand fast in that Religion, and in that Liberty.

My

Preach'd November 5. 1711.

31

My meaning is, that Men should endeavour thorowly to confirm themselves in the Faith ; for they know not to what Trials they may be put — That they shou'd lead pious Lives, as the best Method of securing the *Protestant* Religion, and engaging the Favour of God — And that they shou'd take care that they do not fall in with those Principles, which made way for *Papery* in that Day, and which are the most dreadful Principles of it ; I mean the Principles of Persecution for Conscience sake. This is really acting the part of a *Papist*, let the Persecutor call himself by what Name he pleases. And let us beware of such Men as do indeed turn Faith into Faction, and Religion into Rebellion. A very signal Instance whereof we have had in these Nations, when in this Day of Thanksgiving for such Deliverances, the very same Principles were with the utmost Heat recommended to the Magistracy of this City, which destroy'd its Liberty, depriv'd it of its Charter, and which made the *Revolution* it self necessary.

So stand fast in your Civil Liberties ! Let no slavish Principles corrupt and poison your Minds ! Remember we are a Nation govern'd by known Laws ; and let no Man complement himself out of that invaluable Blessing. For tho' it is not to be imagin'd that the *Queen*, who has been a Nursing-Mother to these Nations, would misimprove such a Power, yet who knows what succeeding Ages may suffer for it, and how they may rise up and curse us for so doing ?

To conclude,

Let us shew our selves sensible of the Deliverance God has bless'd us with, by supporting the *Protestant* Religion, the Title of the *Queen*, the *Liberties* of the People, against all Pretenders whatsoever ; and while we thank God for the Mercies of this Day, let us remember Him that was made our Deliverer, who expos'd himself to the utmost Hazards for our Liberties and Religion : And if he thought 'em so valuable, who had no Interest in them ; certainly much more ought we to think 'em, who enjoy the Blessings of them.

Wherefore, let us go on in the Fear of the Lord, and the Love of one another : And then, as God has helped us, so we trust he will still continue to help us ; *For our Help is in the Name of the Lord that made Heaven and Earth.* Amen.

F I N I S.

